



Department of Labor and Training
RHODE ISLAND



QUALIHOG

QUALIFIED HIRING OPPORTUNITY GRANT

Fiscal Year 2022 Program Guidelines

OVERVIEW

Rhode Island continues to experience economic and labor market disruptions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. As part of the state's overall strategy to help employers and job seekers recover from the pandemic, the Qualified Hiring Opportunity Grant (Quahog) program seeks to assist Rhode Island employers in meeting their immediate hiring needs while helping unemployed Rhode Islanders return to the labor force.

Quahog is a temporary grant program designed to support Rhode Island's economic recovery by encouraging employers to partner with the Department of Labor and Training in meeting their workforce needs and hiring currently unemployed Rhode Islanders. The program provides a 25% wage reimbursement for up to 300 hours for any qualified position that is filled by a presently unemployed Rhode Islander. Employers must engage the Department of Labor and Training in one or more recruitment activities (defined below) and meet other eligibility criteria.

KEY TERMS

For the purposes of this Grant Program the following terms apply:

Employer

A Rhode Island-based private or non-profit entity, company or organization entering into the contract agreement with the Department and providing the work experience and paying wages to the Employee. For the purposes of payment by the State of Rhode Island, the Employer may also be referred to as the approved RI state supplier.

Qualified Hiring Opportunity

An open employment position paying no less than \$15/hour and for no less than 30 hours a week that is filled by a previously unemployed Rhode Islander. Although there is no maximum wage limit, the Department will only reimburse for wages up to \$20/hour.

Employee

An unemployed Rhode Island resident authorized to work in the United States who is hired by the Employer and named in the application and contract to participate in the Quahog program. The employee cannot be a subcontractor or hired under 1099. The employee cannot be a family member or otherwise related to the employer. The employee cannot have a prior employment relationship with the employer within the previous six (6) months of the date of application.

Employers cannot receive funding for any employees that are or have been subsidized by another government program. This includes, but is not limited to, the Back to Work Rhode Island program, the state Work Immersion program, the federal On-the-Job Training program, or any other public subsidy or incentive program.

Employers are eligible to receive support to hire 10 new or rehired employees under this program.

EMPLOYER ELIGIBILITY

Employers must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Classified as a for-profit or not-for-profit entity doing business in RI (public sector employers are not eligible for the Quahog program);
- Have been an established business in the state of Rhode Island prior to 1/1/21.
- Not be engaged in any activity that is illegal under Federal, State, or Local law.
- Be a viable business that is not permanently closed nor in, or planning to enter, federal bankruptcy or state receivership (meaning it is either open or temporarily closed).
- Not be on the federal “Do Not Pay” list (<https://donotpay.treasury.gov>).
- Has partnered with the state Department of Labor and Training to meet their hiring needs in the last six months (see page 4);
- Is an approved supplier that is registered in the Ocean State Procures system (‘OSP’). If the business is NOT currently registered with OSP, the employer must register before applying for the program.
- **NOTE:** Ocean State Procures is a NEW supplier management system. Accounts did not automatically transfer from the previous RIFANS system so applicants must register with Ocean State Procures even if they had a previous RIFANS registration.

Grant applicants must complete the state supplier requirement prior to applying for funding.

Please [click here](#) to be directed to the OSP application.

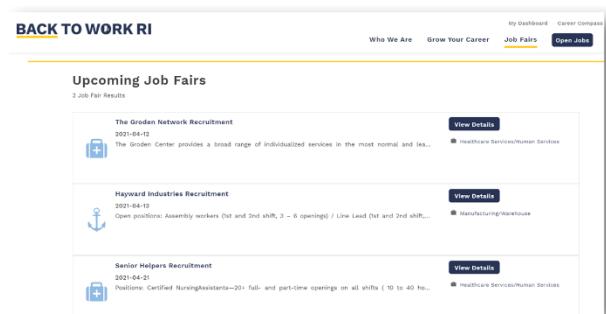
For questions regarding OSP please contact WebProcure.Support@perfect.com or call (401) 574-8100.

The employer may also visit the State of RI Division of Purchasing’s website.

PARTNERING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND TRAINING

In order to be eligible for the Quahog program, an employer must engage with the Department of Labor and Training in one or more recruitment activities (defined below). The DLT has a range of recruitment, training, and hiring programs designed to assist employers in meeting their talent needs while connecting presently unemployed Rhode Islanders with employment opportunities. This requirement can be met in one of the following ways:

1. **Post qualified job openings to the state job portal through EmployRI:** Employers can post job openings on the Department's virtual hiring board www.employri.org. If additional assistance is needed, please contact Christopher.Tanguay@dlt.ri.gov or 401-462-8791. Positions must pay no less than \$15.00/hr and be for no less than 30/hrs per week. The suggested number of postings depends on the size of the employer:
 - Employers of 20 or fewer: 1 job posting
 - Employers of 20-50: 3 job postings
 - Employers of 50+: 5 job postings
2. **Host a virtual job fair/ hiring event:** Employers can email DLT.ESU@DLT.RI.GOV to schedule a virtual job fair. A virtual job fair eliminates the challenges of social distancing and transportation and can help you reach a large and diverse talent pool.



[Note: While Employers must document partnership with the Department to be eligible for the QUAHOG program, Employees named in a QUAHOG application do not have to have been hired through the Department]

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

1. The employee must be a new hire or a returning employee whose date of separation was at least six months prior to hire. Current employees or contracted/1099 employees are not eligible.
2. Positions must pay no less than \$15/hr and be for no less than 30/hrs a week
3. The work experience must provide between a minimum of **120** to a maximum of **300** total hours to be eligible for reimbursement. The maximum length of the contract cannot exceed 20 weeks.
4. Wage Reimbursement Rates: 25% for hourly wages paid up to \$20.00/hr.
5. Individual employers are limited to no more than ten (10) Qualified Hiring Opportunity Grants during the period of August 16, 2021 through June 30, 2021.
6. Employers are eligible to receive reimbursement only for wages paid to employees after the date of application.
7. The availability of the Quahog program is contingent upon the availability of funding.

ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES

To be eligible for the Quahog program, an employee must be:

- A Rhode Island resident, legally authorized to work in the United States;
- At least 18 years of age; and
- Unemployed

For the purposes of this program, a new hire is defined as an employee with a hire date after the date of application. The employee cannot be a family member or otherwise related to the employer. While the Quahog program allows rehiring of staff that previously separated from the employer; the employee cannot have a prior employment relationship with the employer within the previous six (6) months of the date of application.

When submitting for reimbursement, if paystubs or timecards show that an employee has worked with the company prior to the date of application, the contract shall be considered null and void.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Before a work experience can begin, an application must be submitted and approved by the Department. Quahog applications are available online at <https://forms.office.com/g/KLfn4EyabP> and are received on rolling basis.

Assuming accurate and complete submissions, applications are typically processed within seven (7) days of receipt of application. Information regarding partnership with the Department of Labor and Training will be confirmed with the relevant partner before approval. Once an application is approved, the employer will receive a Notice of Contract. While employment may start at any date after an application is submitted, the Department cannot reimburse for wages earned prior to the start date of the contact.

Applications must be completed directly by employers and are accepted online ONLY. Paper based applications will not be accepted.

Each submission is initially reviewed by DLT staff to ensure all sections of the application are complete. Applications are reviewed for appropriate wages to be paid to the Employee, total hours requested, start and end dates of the work experience, and confirmation with the relevant Department of Labor and Training partner.

If any issues are identified in the application, the point of contact listed on the application form will receive a letter outlining the items required for approval. The employer must re-apply with the corrections.

By completing an application, the employer is agreeing to the terms and conditions set forth in this document and the QUAHOG application.

KEEP THE RECEIPT!

When an application has been submitted, the employer will view a confirmation page confirming that the application was submitted. If the employer does not view the confirmation page, please contact the GWB within 48 hours for assistance.

Employers are encouraged to print or otherwise save the confirmation page should any issues arise. With such confirmation, the DLT cannot verify the application was submitted or received.

AWARD PROCESS

Once an application is approved, the applicant will receive the Notice of Contract via email.

A signed application from the Employer and a signed Notice of Contract from the DLT enters the parties into a contractual agreement. The date of signature becomes the contract start date and the contract end date is automatically 20 weeks after.

PAYMENT AND REPORTING

All payments in the Quahog program are made on a cost reimbursement basis in which the employer pays the Employee's wages up front and requests reimbursement at the conclusion of the contract. An employer is eligible for reimbursement even if employment terminates before the conclusion of the contracted work experience, as long as the **minimum 120 hours** is met. At the conclusion of the contract, the employer is required to submit a **Request for Reimbursement Form** (which will be provided at the time of award) and appropriate wage records to the GWB at DLT.INVOICE@dlt.ri.gov within 60 days of the contract end date.

If documentation is not received within the 60 days, the reimbursement will not be processed, and the contract will be terminated or closed.

NOTE: The employer may retain the Employee for as long as they like; however, reimbursement is paid for hours and wages worked during the contract period ONLY.

APPEALS

1. All appeals must be filed within two weeks (10 business days) of initial notification of determination a. The appeal should be addressed to the Director – Department of Labor and Training and should be emailed to dlt.gwbinfo@dlt.ri.gov or mailed to the Department at 1511 Pontiac avenue, Cranston, RI 02920. Building 72-2

2. The appeal must include the following information:

- Your name, your employer name, address, and contact telephone number
- A description of the issue

The Director will issue a decision within two weeks (10 business days) of the filing of the appeal. The decision of the Director is final.

ELIGIBLE HOURS

The Department only reimburses for work hours classified as “regular” hours worked. Overtime hours will be counted as regular hours and paid at the contracted rate of pay.

The DLT does NOT reimburse for:

- Holiday pay if the company is closed
- Holiday pay that the Employee worked will be reimbursed at the contracted rate of pay, not time and a half.
- Worker’s Comp Hours
- Family and Medical Leave Act hours
- Vacation time hours
- Sick time hours
- Any other classification other than regular hours

REIMBURSEMENT

Two items are required to request reimbursement:

1. The Request for Reimbursement Form

When the employer receives their Notice of Contract, they will also receive a Request for Reimbursement Form. The form includes final participant information, the number of hours worked during the contract period and the Employee’s Social Security number.

- Social Security numbers are collected at the conclusion of the contract period during the reimbursement process to ensure security and confidentiality
- Social Security numbers are required to confirm Employee’s pre- and post- work experience employment and wages

2. Verification of Wages – Time and Pay Records

There are two (2) forms of acceptable wage records:

- The Employee’s paystubs for each week they worked within the contract; or
- The Employee’s timecards AND canceled/processed checks that verify the Employee was paid.

NOTE: Year to date pay roll records are not accepted.

Wage documents must identify:

- The Employee's first and last name
- The dates of the pay period
- The hourly rate of pay
- The number of hours worked within the pay period

If any of the above items are not present or incorrect, the Department will deny the request for payment and outline the reason for denial. The Employer will have ten (10) business days to correct the issue and return the complete information.

Reduction of Contract Obligation: The Grantor, the Department of Labor and Training, reserves the right to reduce the obligation amount under this contract if the expenditure of funds by the Employer, Grant Recipient, for eligible activities is at such a rate as to likely result in a surplus as the termination of the contract.

CHECKING REIMBURSEMENT STATUS

Payments will be issued within 30 days of receipt of adequate evidence of wages paid. Employers may check [RIPAY](#) for payment information. As a RI State supplier, employers may look up payments submitted to their organization by conducting a vendor search or check number search if they would like to inquire what the payment amount of a check included.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

DLT Staff is available to provide technical assistance throughout the process from the application stage through final reporting.

